

## s e c t i o n m

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

**S**ection 303 (Study of Addition of New National Park System Areas) of Public Law 105-391 states, “Each study shall be completed in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.” The purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act, commonly called NEPA, is to, “. . . *encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation. . . .*” [Emphasis added.]

This section addresses the impact of each proposed management option in regards to the Natural, Cultural, and Socio-economic environments. In addition, it presents the pluses, minuses, and potential impacts of each alternative as well as provides a comparative analysis for decision-makers.

**Management Option 1**

*(Existing Conditions)*

**Natural Environment**

Implementation of Option 1 would be expected to have neither a measurable positive nor negative impact on the natural environment of the study region. Some private sector initiatives involving

individuals or groups may result in helping protect specific Floods features.

**Cultural Environment**

Implementation of Option 1 would be expected to have neither a measurable positive nor negative impact on the cultural environment of study region.

**Socio-economic Environment**

Better coordination at the local level could be beneficial for visitors, and this change may lead to some positive economic benefit.

Without a coordinated interpretive effort across the four-state region, the Floods story could be fragmented and



inconsistent for visitors as they travel from one area to another.

Opportunities for development of interpretive programs and facilities exist, but the costs for these improvements would have to be borne by local governments and the private sector. No specific state or federal designations or new initiatives related to the Floods story would be included under this option. As a result any potential benefit from matching state and/or Federal funding support would be limited.

There are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the implementation of this alternative. However, the lack of a coordinated effort to interpret the Floods story could be a limitation for visitors to the region.

### **Management Option 2**

#### ***Natural Environment***

Implementation of Option 2 would be expected to have a modest positive impact on the natural environment of the Floods region. Some private sector initiatives may provide additional protection of specific Flood features. Initiatives involving state managed lands, such as state parks, could provide additional protection for Flood features.

#### ***Cultural Environment***

Implementation of Option 2 would be expected to have neither a measurable positive nor or negative impact on the cultural environment of the Floods region.

#### ***Socio-economic Environment***

A coordinated interpretive approach involving a four-state initiative would be expected to result in a positive economic benefit for the region. This would be due to an anticipated improvement in information programs targeted to visitors. Additionally, both area residents and visitors to the region could obtain a better understanding of the Ice Age Floods.

State designation and written compacts or agreements could assist in a coordinated interpretive program and provide state funds to match local and private sector contributions. Through a coordinated effort the interpretive story of the Floods would be less fragmented and more consistent for visitors.

Under this option, there is an opportunity for the four states to enhance Floods-related activities while maintaining individual state management of sites. State funding for the coordinated interpretive approach would depend upon the ability of each state legislature to appropriate adequate funds to cover development and operational costs. Funding equity issues among the states may pose a concern because appropriations would be required from each of the four state legislatures.

No specific federal designation or new initiatives related to the Floods story would be included under this option. As a result any potential benefit from matching Federal funding support would be limited.

There are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the implementation of this alternative. The joint participation of the four states in the project region should provide the public with enhanced opportunities to learn more about the Floods story. There may be more attention given to the stewardship of Floods features because of better coordinated efforts and greater public awareness. There will need to be a commitment of state funds to support a quad-state cooperative effort. Potential federal funding sources for the project would not be available because emphasis would be at the state and local level.

### **Management Option 3**

#### ***Natural Environment***

Implementation of Option 3 would be expected to have a modest positive impact on the natural environment of the Floods region. Some private sector initiatives may provide additional protection of specific Floods features. Coordinated initiatives involving lands managed by both state and federal agencies, such as state parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, and other sites, could provide additional protection of Flood features.

#### ***Cultural Environment***

Implementation of Option 3 would be expected to have neither a measurable positive nor negative impact on the cultural environment of study region. Through National Geologic Trail designation, some cultural features could be highlighted as part of the trail's interpretive program. This interpretive focus could include how people currently use and live on lands that were shaped by the Ice Age Floods thousands of years ago.

#### ***Socio-economic Environment***

Designation of a National Geologic Trail would provide national attention and recognition to the four-state area. This recognition would increase visitation to Flood sites and nearby communities. Through a coordinated effort, the interpretive story of the Floods would be less fragmented and more consistent for visitors.

A coordinated effort by the National Park Service and other partners would enhance the experience of visitors to the Floods region. This enhanced experience could result in a positive benefit to the economy of the region due to improved information programs for visitors. Additionally, both area residents and visitors to the region could obtain a better understanding of the Ice Age Floods.

National Geologic Trail designation would be expected to lead to Congressional funding support for NPS trail staff to assist in project coordination. This assistance would



result in a modest economic benefit in the investment of wages and operational expenditures in and around the community in which the trail office is located. Federal and other funds expended for development and interpretation of various flood sites could lead to a considerable economic benefit to the region. These funds would be in addition to matching state, local, and private sector funding.

Under this option, the management of the National Geologic Trail would be the primary responsibility of National Park Service personnel. Efforts would need to be made to ensure the desired coordinated approach to interpretation, education, and marketing of the Floods story was inclusive, collaborative, and represented a consensus among the various public and private entities involved.

There are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the implementation of this alternative. The National Geologic Trail designation, coupled with proposed partnership activities involving the NPS, the four states in the Floods region, and other public agencies should provide the public with enhanced opportunities to learn more about the Floods story. There may be more attention given to the stewardship of Floods features because of better coordinated efforts and greater public awareness. There would also need to be a commitment of both state and federal funds to support the cooperative effort. The allocation of annual operating funds by the National Park Service to support the National Geologic Trail will impact existing annual operating support provided other NPS units unless additional funding can be secured.

### **Management Option 4**

#### ***Natural Environment***

Implementation of Option 4 would be expected to have a modest positive impact on the natural environment of the Floods region. Some private sector initiatives may provide additional protection of specific Flood features. Coordinated initiatives through the Commission and its partners involving lands managed by both state and federal agencies could provide additional protection of Floods features.

#### ***Cultural Environment***

Implementation of Option 4 would be expected to have neither a measurable positive nor negative impact on the cultural environment of the Floods region. Through National Geologic Region designation and establishment of Floods tour routes, the interpretive program could highlight cultural features of the present-day landscape. This interpretive focus could include how people currently use and live on lands that were shaped by the Floods.

***Socio-economic Environment***

Designation of a National Geologic Region and the development of the Ice Age Flood Pathways tour route program would provide national attention and recognition for the four-state area. This designation could increase visitation to the area Floods sites and nearby communities. Through a coordinated effort, the interpretive story of the Floods would be less fragmented and more consistent for visitors.

The Commission's efforts to coordinate interpretation should help visitors better understand the Floods story and potentially result in a positive economic benefit for the region.

Through designation of a National Geologic Region and development of the Pathways tour routes, Congress would be expected to provide funding support for Commission staff. This support would result in a modest economic benefit in the investment of wages and operational expenditures in and around the

community in which the Commission office is located. Federal funds for development and interpretation of various flood sites and tour routes could lead to considerable economic benefit to the region. These funds would be in addition to matching funds from state, local, and private sector efforts.

A Commission management approach brings the aura of "National" status to the project while maintaining a cross-section of local, state, federal, and private interests through Commission appointments. However, the Commission approach also creates a level of management complexity that will challenge Commission members, its staff, and its partners. The collaborative approach of the Commission and its formal relationship to state and federal agencies and the Ice Age Floods Institute should provide a framework for other partnerships in the Floods region. The Commission management structure may also result in broader and more direct participation by state governmental entities. Nominations to the Commission

would be sought from each state, thus more directly involving state agencies and the office of the governor.

There are no significant cumulative impacts associated with the implementation of this alternative. The National Geologic Region and Floods Pathways designation, coupled with proposed partnership activities involving the Ice Age Floods Regional Commission, the four states in the region, and other public agencies, should provide the public with enhanced opportunities to learn more about the Floods story. There may be more attention given to the stewardship of Floods features because of better coordinated efforts and greater public awareness. There would also need to be a commitment of both state and federal funds to support the cooperative effort. The allocation of annual operating funds by the Department of the Interior (DOI) to support the Commission would impact existing annual operating support provided to DOI agencies unless additional funding can be secured.



## Environmental Consequences